

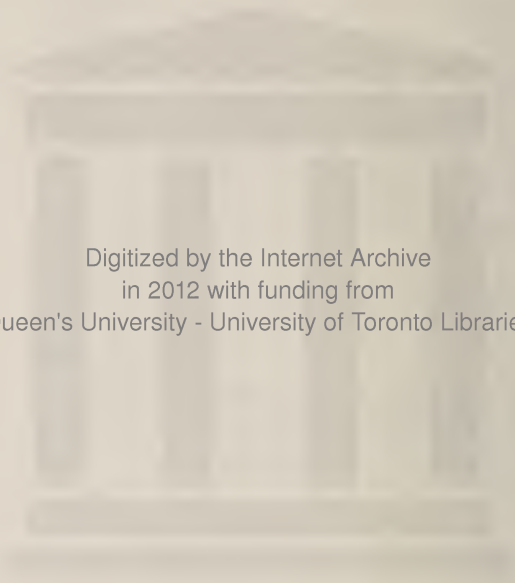
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A N
E S S A Y
F O R T H E
P R E S S.



L O N D O N,

Printed for A. BALDWIN near the
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ESSAY

FOR

PRIZES



LONDON

Printed for A. Baldwin near the
Oxford-street in Warwick-Lane. 1712.

A N
E S S A Y
F O R T H E
P R E S S .

THAT there should be a Restraint upon the Press, seems a Matter of Necessity : But the Manner of it, a Matter of Debate.

The Use and Intent of Printing, is (the same with that of Preaching) for communicating our Thoughts to others.

And there is equal Reason (in it self) for suppressing the one as the other.

But this Communication being the natural Right of Mankind (as sociable Creatures, and all embark'd in one common Salvation) the suppressing of either of these is *taking away the Childrens Bread.*

And in this Communication; Printing is more diffusive than Speaking.

In the beginning of the Gospel, for calling the Gentiles, the Spirit of God interpreted the first Preaching of it to every Auditor in his own Language.

And since that miraculous Communication of it hath ceas'd,

It pleas'd God in his own Time to have dictated to Man the Invention of Printing, to supply the place of it.

By which what is at first publish'd in one Language only, is made intelligible to all others by Translations.

And tho several Errors have and will be vented by the Occasion of this Invention; this is no more an Argument against the Invention it self, than the growing of Tares among Wheat, is an Argument against sowing of Corn.

Nor any more a Reason for suppressing it by a Law, than it would be for shutting
up

p the Church-Doors, because Hypocrites
 roud into the Church with true Worship-
 ers.

Whenever the Sons of God came to pre-
 sent themselves before the Lord, Satan would
 ostle in among them, and present himself
 before the Lord also.

And yet we don't hear that they quitted
 their Devotion upon it.

And as Satan used our Saviour himself
 to :

*Have not I chosen you Twelve, and one of
 you is a Devil.*

So it will be to the End of the World.

Wherefore to me, the Clergy of the Church
 of England, in admitting their Auditors to
 the Sacraments without any personal Exa-
 mination, seem more Orthodox with that
 standing Rule, *Let every Man examine him-
 self*, than the Ministers of those Dissenting
 Congregations, that first put each Commu-
 nicant to a Test of Experience ; there being
 no such Test necessary in the Churches of
 God.

Nor are they thereby secure of what they
 intend, (to have none among them but true
 Believers.)

A Hypocrite will stand and sit, and kne and pray, as the People of God.

And I am apt to believe, that upon such a Test, the Pharisee by giving himself many distinguishing Characters, might have had Admission; and the poor Publican, that had nothing to say for himself to God or Man, but *Lord have mercy upon me a Sinner* might have been excluded.

And as by the common Rules of Justice 'tis better ten Guilty escape, than one Innocent suffer :

So in common Charity among Christians it is a less Error to admit ten unworthy, than to exclude one believing, Communicant.

And by the like Rules both of Justice and Charity to Mankind, 'tis safer to suffer ten Errors to be vented, than one necessary Truth conceal'd.

For Man is not bound to embrace the Errors; but 'tis at his peril, to come to the Knowledge of the Truth in Matters of Salvation.

When *Virgil* (by Reflection on his own Works) finding some things imperfect, had devised them to the Flames, the *Roman* Emperor strain'd a Point of Law to preserve them from that Sentence.

Frangatu

Frangatur Legum potius veneranda Potestas.

*Rather than Maro shall in Fire burn,
Let Laws themselves be cast into the Urn.*

All which is hinted as Reasons against restraining the Press, by subjecting it to a Licence

And the Project of a Tax upon it, seems impracticable.

But the present Licentiousness being chiefly occasion'd by concealing the Names of the Authors :

The most just and natural Remedy, seems by prohibiting the Prints without the Names of the Authors to them.

As the Press is now used, it is a Paper-inquisition; by which any Man may be arraign'd, judg'd, and condemn'd (ay, and broad Hints given for his Execution too) without ever knowing his Accusers.

If this be objected to, as an imperfect Remedy; for that, notwithstanding this, things may be clandestinely printed and dispers'd :

So they may under the Restraint by Licence.

No

No Prohibitions of human Laws can totally extirpate the Evils prohibited, but serve only to restrain the frequent Commission of them.

When Men have once taught their Beasts to refrain trespassing upon their Neighbour's Lands,

Then may they expect to teach their Fellow-Creatures to cease from Sin.

In the mean time, they must content themselves with driving the Offenders into Corner. (as they do their Cattel into Pounds.)

F I N I S.

